

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SY-04 OPR-01 A-01 IO-10 ACDA-05 MC-01 SCS-03

SCA-01 NEA-09 /086 W

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P 271430Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3104

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0093

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, ET

SUBJECT: ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. (U) ON 26 JAN AT APPROX 1400 HRS AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE WAS
HEARD COMING FROM DIRECTION OF AIRPORT. LATER REPORTS INDICATE
GUNFIRE WAS MERELY CELEBRATION BY 2ND DIV TROOPS WHO HAD
SAFELY RETURNED FROM KEREN.

2. (LOU) ON 26 JAN ARMY TROOPS BLOCKADED ROAD ENTRANCE TO
ASMARA AIRPORT, ALLOWING ONLY PASSENGERS AND AIRPORT PERSONNEL
TO PASS. I WAS INFORMED BY AIRPORT POLICE LT, WHO WAS
APPROACHING BLOCKADE, THAT I WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PASS.
BLOCKADE WAS LIFTED THIS MORNING AND WAS PROBABLY PART OF OVERALL
WEEKEND ALERT. CARS LEAVING ON ROAD SOUTH TO DECAMERE WERE
SEARCHED BY TROOPS AT THE CHECKPOINT.

3. (C) I RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORT THIS MORNING THAT
TANKS FROM THE 3RD DIV HAD PASSED THRU ADDIS THIS WEEKEND
HEADED NORTH.

COMMENT: TO ERITREANS, TANKS INCLUDE TANKS, APCs, AND
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PANHARDS. APPRECIATE CONFIRMATION FROM ADDIS ON WHAT THE

VEHICLES WERE, THEIR DESTINATION AND MISSION.

4. (C) THIS PARA BASED ON 27 JAN CONVERSATION WITH ETHIOPIAN NAVAL OFFICER. CHIEF OF STAFF, M.G. GIZAW; GFC, BG GETACHEW NADOW CAME TO ASMARA LAST WEEK TO REVIEW ERITREAN SITUATION. SOURCE REPORTS THAT GETACHEW SAID THE INSURGENTS COULD BE FINISHED OFF IN FIVE DAYS. SOURCE HAS HEARD THAT ARMY AND AIR FORCE WILL USE CANBERRAS (PLANES?) AND GAS. I SUGGESTED THAT USE OF GAS WAS AGAINST RULE OF INTERNATIONAL WAR AND WOULD RESULT IN INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION. RUMOR IS CIRCULATING THAT ETH GOVT HAS ATTEMPTED TO POISON WATER USED BY INSURGENTS. ANOTHER STORY, BASED ON ALLEGED COPY OF KING FAISAL'S LETTER HAS SAUDIA ARABIA PROMISING FULL SUPPORT TO PRE- AND POST-INDEPENDENT ERITREA. ANOTHER RUMOR SUGGESTS THAT EMANUEL AMDEMICAEL, ERITREAN GOVGEN MAY SEEK POL ASYLUM AND NOT RETURN TO ETHIOPIA FROM HIS TRIP WITH MIKAEL IMRU. SOURCE REPORTS THAT A JOINT FORCES COMMANDO UNIT BEAT AND DETAINED ERITREAN AIR FORCE NCOS ON 24 JAN JUST AS THEY WERE PREPARING TO DEFECT. MOST ERITREAN MEMBERS OF NAVY AND AIRFORCE HAVE EITHER DEFECTED TO ELF/PLF OR BEEN ARRESTED ON THE PREMISE THAT THEY ARE SECURITY THREATS. THIS ACTION INITIATED BY ENLISTED MEN.

5. (C) THIS PARA BASED ON 27 JAN CONVERSATION WITH MEMBER OF COMMITTEE OF 38, WHO IS A LAWYER AND FRIEND OF CONGEN, HE REPORTED THAT WEEKEND MEETING WAS FAILURE. HE MET WITH ELF LEADER AND PLF LEADERS IN SEPARATE MEETINGS SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. COMMITTEE OF 38 WAS TOLD NOT TO COME BACK SINCE THEY DID NOT HAVE FIRM PROPOSALS TO NEGOTIATE. SOURCE FEELS NOW THAT HE HAS BEEN MISUSED BY THE ETH GOVT. SOURCE REPORTS THAT ON HIS TRIPS TO AND FROM THIS WEEKEND THERE WAS A CONTINUAL STREAM OF PEOPLE LEAVING ASMARA. SOURCE SAYS MEMBERS OF ELF/PLF ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT AND THINK THEY WILL PREVAIL. SOURCE REPORTS SAME STORY ABOUT ARMY PLANS TO USE GAS, WHICH HE EXPLAINS, IS A VOMIT INDUCING TYPE. SOURCE SAYS ELF/PLF HAVE ANTI-TANK AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS AROUND ASMARA, BUT THAT THEY HAVE NO DEFENSE AGAINST GAS. SOURCE SAW DR. BEREKET-AB HABTE-SELASSIE IN THE ELF/PLF CAMPS THIS WEEKEND. SOURCE AND I BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT ARMY WILL INITIATE MILITARY CAMPAIGN PRIOR TO RETURN OF MICHAEL IMRU DELEGATION TO ETHIOPIA. AFTER THAT, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE BELIEVE WAR IS INEVITABLE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PARADOXICAL IF HE WERE TO DIE BY AMERICAN ARMS IN THE HANDS OF HIS ETHIOPIAN BROTHERS.

6. (C) COMMENT: PRIMARY DANGER TO AMERICANS IN ASMARA IS BECOMING INADVERTENT VICTIM OF CIVIL WAR BETWEEN INSURGENTS AND ETHIOPIAN ARMY. THERE IS LITTLE IF ANY ACTIVE HOSTILITY FROM ERITREANS TOWARDS AMERICANS IN ASMARA. THIS IS IN

SHARP CONTRAST TO REPORTED STONINGS THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN ADDIS.
PERRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MOBILIZATION, MILITARY EXERCISES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ASMARA00093
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750029-0726
From: ASMARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750119/aaaaaqnd.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <12 NOV 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006